United Nations S/2014/442

Security Council

Distr.: General
26 June 2014

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 23 December 2013 (S/2013/759), the President of the Security Council agreed to extend the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) until 31 December 2016 and requested that I report to the Council every six months on the implementation of the mandate.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2014. It provides an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and outlines the activities undertaken by UNOWA in the areas of good offices, enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security and promoting good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming. It also outlines the efforts of UNOWA in engaging regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union, to promote peace and stability in West Africa.

II. Developments and trends in West Africa

3. Since the issuance of my previous report (S/2013/732), notable progress has been made in the region in addressing political and security challenges. Countries of the Mano River Union, with the support of ECOWAS and UNOWA, commenced efforts to implement the cross-border security strategy for the Mano River Union, which was adopted on 25 October 2013. Successful presidential and legislative elections paved the way for the return to constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. The mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), which once hosted the largest United Nations multidimensional peacekeeping operation, was successfully completed on 31 March, bringing an end to a decade and a half of successive United Nations peace operations in the country. ECOWAS continued its efforts to promote regional economic integration, seeking to consolidate the common market, harmonize trade policies and fully implement the trade liberalization scheme. At the same time, in the lead-up to high-stakes elections in 2015 and 2016 in several countries in the subregion, political tensions continued to rise as national stakeholders positioned themselves to contest the elections.

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A. Political developments and trends

4. I visited Freetown on 5 March to mark the closure of UNIPSIL and the handover of responsibilities to the United Nations country team. While there, I met with the President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, as well as representatives of political parties and civil society, to congratulate them on the remarkable strides made in post-conflict recovery, democratic transition and peace consolidation, and to assure them of the continued support of the United Nations.

5. The successful holding of the presidential and legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau on 13 April, followed by the presidential run-off election on 18 May, were important precursors to the full restoration of constitutional order in the country. ECOWAS played a key role in supporting the efforts of the Transitional Government and the national electoral commission, and in mobilizing other regional partners to provide support throughout the process. My Special Representative for West Africa and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), Said Djinnit, demonstrated commitment and leadership in promoting a coordinated approach among partners in support of the political and electoral processes in the country. He also conducted vital good offices with all relevant national stakeholders, which helped to foster a peaceful environment, in particular by engaging the military, the police and civilians to work together for the safety of the electoral process.

6. In Mauritania, negotiations between the opposition coalition and the Government broke down in April as a result of the failure of both sides to reach agreement on an agenda for the political dialogue. The majority of the opposition groups in the country decided to boycott the presidential elections, which were held on 21 June. On 22 June, provisional results were announced with the incumbent, President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, receiving 81.9 per cent of the vote.

7. Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire. Guinea, Nigeria and Togo launched preparations for presidential and legislative elections during 2015. The preparations are, in some cases, being undertaken, against a background of insecurity and social and political tensions, as well as sharp divisions and contestation between political actors.

8. In Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan convened a national conference on 17 March, calling on the delegates to examine and make recommendations on the political and socioeconomic challenges facing the country. The security situation in the north-eastern part of the country severely deteriorated over the past six months. On 20 May, the National Assembly approved the request of President Jonathan for a renewal of the state of emergency, declared on 14 May 2013, in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa States for another six-month period.

9. The Niger continued to face political tensions following the departure, in August 2013, of the Mouvement démocratique nigérien/Federation africaine (MODEN-FA LUMANA) party from the ruling coalition — the Movement for Niger Renaissance (MRN). Since then, relations between the political parties, and between the opposition and the Government, have remained strained. The tensions hampered the conduct of the first ordinary session of the National Assembly, which opened on 4 March. Meanwhile, the Government launched technical preparations for local and presidential elections scheduled to be held in 2016.

10. Burkina Faso has been experiencing political tensions since July 2013 as a result of divisions within the country over the establishment of an 89-member Senate, which was criticized by the opposition and civil society as an attempt by the Government to seek to modify article 37 of the Constitution, on presidential term limits. Tension heightened in January when 75 of the 400 members of the National Political Bureau of the ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) resigned from the ruling party and joined forces with the opposition and others to create a new political party, the People's Movement for Progress. On 18 January, the opposition commenced peaceful demonstrations against the potential candidacy of President Blaise Compaoré in the next presidential elections. For its part, the ruling CDP party organized demonstrations in favour of a referendum to amend article 37 of the Constitution. A mediation attempt by a group of elders led by the former President of Burkina Faso, Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, was conducted between 10 February and 10 March, but ended prematurely owing to a lack of consensus on organizational issues. Both the ruling party and the opposition have expressed willingness to continue engaging in dialogue.

11. In Togo, the Government and the opposition remained divided over modalities for the residual political and institutional reforms envisaged in the global political agreement signed in Lomé on 21 August 2006. They agreed to hold a dialogue on a 12-point agenda, facilitated by Archbishop Nicodème Barrigah-Bénissan, former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The talks opened on 26 May but the opposition withdrew on 3 June, owing to what it described as the silence of the presidential camp on key issues, such as the presidential term and the ballot system.

B. Socioeconomic trends

12. Macroeconomic projections for West Africa in 2014 are positive. During the reporting period, Nigeria's gross domestic product for 2013 was revalued at $510 billion, making it the largest economy in Africa. The growth rate in Nigeria is expected to reach 7.4 per cent in 2014, while Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana have projected growth rates of 8 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively. However, disparities in wealth distribution and socioeconomic development persisted, with increasing poverty and unemployment in several countries in the subregion. During the reporting period, workers and students protested over issues such as working conditions and the shortages of basic services in many West African countries.

C. Humanitarian trends

13. During the reporting period, insecurity and social tensions continued to affect the civilian population in many countries of the subregion, particularly owing to the situations in northern Mali and in north-eastern Nigeria. Humanitarian needs in the Sahel region increased, with over 20 million people, or one in seven inhabitants of the Sahel region, being food insecure, as a result of a combination of both acute and chronic factors, such as the consequences of the 2011 food crisis, climate change, population growth and conflict. The West Africa region has also been affected since the end of 2013 by an unprecedented Ebola outbreak. In addition, humanitarian interventions continued to be severely underfunded in the region.

14. Worrisome trends in respect of food insecurity, malnutrition and population displacement persisted, partly as a result of insecurity in Mali and north-eastern Nigeria. In Mali, approximately 1.5 million people were reported to be in need of immediate food assistance, almost double the number registered in December 2013. In Côte d'Ivoire, approximately 400,000 people (2 per cent of the population) were reported to be affected by food insecurity. In Mauritania, the Government is distributing food items to assist in addressing the needs of some 300,000 people (about 10 per cent of the population) suffering from food insecurity. Negative coping mechanisms, such as selling off livestock, reducing meals and removing children from school continued to be reported. The 2014-2016 strategic response plan for the Sahel, which was launched in January, has only received 24 per cent funding to date.

15. Persistent insecurity in northern Mali triggered large-scale population displacement, with a resultant increase in humanitarian needs. Some 137,000 Malians remain in neighbouring Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and the Niger. Continued violence in the north of the country has affected the return of refugees.

16. In north-eastern Nigeria, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate, with a spike in internal displacements. Nearly 4.2 million people are food insecure and 510,000 children under age 5 suffer from severe acute malnutrition. During the visit to Nigeria of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, from 11 to 14 March, and of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, from 26 to 29 March, the Government expressed willingness to facilitate access by human rights monitors and humanitarian actors to the north-eastern part of the country. A joint United Nations and National Emergency Management Agency humanitarian assessment mission, which visited the three north-eastern states in May, concluded that at least 650,000 people were internally displaced as a result of violence in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States. An estimated 60,000 people were also reported to have fled to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. The mission noted that Government institutions faced capacity and coordination constraints at the federal and state levels, which were limiting the effectiveness of the current response to the humanitarian situation and compounding the impact of malnutrition and lack of access to education and health facilities. It also noted that there were concerns related to the lack of transparency in the registration process for internally displaced persons.

17. On 22 March, an outbreak of the Ebola virus was confirmed in the Nzérékoré region of the Guinée Forestière area near Guinea's border with Liberia. The outbreak subsequently spread to Conakry and Liberia. The number of cases declined steadily between mid-April and early May, but has begun to rise again. Overall, as of 20 June, 567 cases, including 342 deaths, had been registered in the region, making it the deadliest in years. Several international agencies have been providing support to the Ministries of Health of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The World Health Organization (WHO), among other things, has deployed clinicians and infection prevention and control experts, developed training materials for those experts and delivered personal protective equipment to the affected countries. In addition, 100 WHO experts have been deployed to the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, which is a technical collaboration framework of institutions and networks that pools human and technical resources for the rapid identification, confirmation and response to outbreaks of international importance. In mid-April, Guinean authorities also announced an estimated 440 cases of meningitis, with

40 recorded deaths. The incidence and rapid spread of Ebola, coupled with increases in meningitis cases in Guinea, has revealed the relative weaknesses of the health systems of the affected countries.

D. Trends in human rights and gender issues

18. Weak institutions and a lack of political will and resources continued to hamper efforts by countries of the region to protect human rights and combat impunity. Human trafficking and child labour also continued to be reported in some countries. On a positive note, in February, Mauritania adopted a road map for the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and its consequences, in the context of the eradication of slavery practices in Mauritania. This followed a consultative process between the Government, civil society and other national actors, in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

19. In Nigeria, multiple and increasingly violent attacks by Boko Haram continued, targeting villages, markets, hospitals and schools, particularly in the north-eastern states. On 15 February, in two separate incidents along Lake Chad (Borno State), the group killed over 150 people. The group also carried out attacks near Abuja and in the city of Jos. Bomb explosions on the outskirts of Abuja reportedly killed 70 on 14 April and 19 people on 1 May. On 14 April, approximately 276 girls were kidnapped at the Government girls secondary school in Chibok, Borno State. The leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, subsequently released a video claiming responsibility and stating that the girls would be subjected to forced marriages and slavery. The incident triggered general outrage and unprecedented mobilization against the group, as well as international support for Nigeria's efforts to ensure the safe return of the girls. Further attacks and abductions by the group in northern Cameroon and southern areas of the Niger signalled the regional dimension of the threat.

20. During the reporting period, UNOWA continued its efforts in support of gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's participation in peace and security processes. In Mauritania, 6 of the 11 new ministers appointed to the cabinet were women, marking progress towards the implementation of the country's 2006 law on quotas. With regard to protection, the Peacebuilding Fund's gender promotion initiative, launched in June 2011, enabled Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea to include measures against sexual and gender-based violence in their respective security sector reform programmes.

E. Security trends

21. The subregion continued to be affected by multiple security threats, notably transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and violent extremism, maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, cross-border security challenges in the Sahel and the Mano River Basin, and security challenges posed by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and in the bordering countries of Cameroon, Chad and the Niger.

22. The Niger continued to face cross-border security threats owing to the situations in Libya, Mali and Nigeria. The influx of returnees and refugees from

north-eastern Nigeria into the border region of Diffa continued. On 7 May, authorities in the Niger reportedly arrested 14 Boko Haram supporters for planning to attack Government targets in the Diffa region and in Niamey.

23. In Senegal, progress was made in efforts to find a lasting solution to the 32-year-old conflict launched by the armed separatist group, Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). President Macky Sall, who has made peace and development a priority under his presidency, visited the region in March and announced a special development project as part of his efforts for the socioeconomic development of the country. On 28 April, the leader of MFDC announced that he had imposed a unilateral ceasefire on his fighters in the implementation of his commitment to find a lasting solution to the conflict. This followed months of mediation efforts by the Rome-based Comunita' di Sant'Egidio Christian association, with the support of the United States of America and other international partners.

24. With regard to illicit drug trafficking, the rising production of methamphetamine in some parts of the region was observed, as illustrated by the increasing number of clandestine laboratories being discovered and dismantled and by the more frequent seizures of illegal shipments originating from West Africa and reaching East Asia. The subregion remains a transit zone for heroin from Asia and cocaine from South America. West Africa is also becoming a destination for drugs such as Tramadol, a synthetic painkiller available on the black market with higher dosages than medically authorized, which is leading to clinical dependence and addiction.

25. Countries in the region continued to face capacity gaps with respect to national law enforcement and maritime domain management. This has hampered their ability to control illegal fishing and poaching in vulnerable coastal areas, jeopardizing the ecological balance and economies of the affected countries. The region also continued to be a transit point for wildlife trafficking. On 23 and 29 January, 3.8 tons of ivory were seized at Lomé port in containers destined for Viet Nam, via Nigeria and Benin. On 17 April, Nigerian authorities intercepted 449 kg of ivory at the airport in Lagos, which were hidden in cargo destined for Singapore.

26. In the Mano River Union countries, two cross-border incidents between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia were reported, underscoring the importance of the timely implementation of the Union's strategy for cross-border security. On 23 February, armed individuals attacked positions of the Force républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) in Fété and Grabo, near the border with Liberia, killing four FRCI soldiers and a civilian. The incident represented a setback since the previous major attack in that area had occurred in March 2013. On 15 May, an unknown number of individuals again attacked the village of Fété, near Grabo, which resulted in 13 people being killed, including two children. Approximately 3,500 people were displaced as a result of the incident.

27. Despite the political commitment and progress made by the countries of the Sahel in addressing security challenges through bilateral and multilateral initiatives, the incidents in Kidal, Mali, in May highlighted the persisting insecurity in northern Mali and underscored the need for a political solution through inclusive dialogue. The joint visit to Kidal on 23 May of the President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, currently serving as the Chairperson of the African Union, and my Special Representative led to a ceasefire. All sides also stated their commitment to

resolving differences through dialogue. It will be important for the Government, the armed groups and civil society actors to redouble their efforts to work together in earnest, in close cooperation with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), towards a political process that delivers on the hopes of the Malian people for sustainable peace.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. Good offices and special assignments undertaken by my Special Representative

Burkina Faso

28. In preparation for further political engagement by my Special Representative, UNOWA and ECOWAS conducted an early warning mission to Ouagadougou from 20 to 25 April. The team met with the leadership of the ruling and main opposition parties, representatives of civil society, including religious, youth and women's groups, and international partners. Several interlocutors highlighted the prevailing tensions over the possible amendment of article 37 of the Constitution. They warned that the formal announcement of the date of the proposed referendum could trigger violence since the population appeared deeply divided over the issue.

29. My Special Representative met with President Compaoré in Ouagadougou on 24 March, against a backdrop of growing political tensions in the country. My Special Representative emphasized the need to preserve the democratic achievements of Burkina Faso and the country's social cohesion and stability. President Compaoré indicated his willingness to pursue dialogue with the opposition and cited the role played by the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, who had engaged with various Burkina Faso parties in March. My Special Representative maintained contact with President Ouattara in that regard and also discussed the situation with the President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, in his capacity as the current Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS.

Nigeria

30. My Special Representative held meetings with Nigerian officials and representatives of the international community in early February in Abuja, on the margins of the meetings of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, to discuss political and security developments in the country. On that occasion, he reiterated the readiness of the United Nations to assist the Independent National Electoral Commission in creating conducive conditions for free, peaceful and inclusive general elections in 2015. He also discussed the human rights situation in the north-eastern part of the country with the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian national human rights commission, including the possible deployment of human rights monitors and training in human rights and humanitarian law for the armed forces. From 17 to 28 March, the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a mission to Nigeria to assess electoral needs, which paved the way for the United Nations to provide increased technical support to the Independent National Electoral Commission during the elections in 2015.

31. In view of the persisting violence and insecurity in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, and following consultations with President Jonathan, on 8 May I designated my Special Representative for West Africa as my High-level Representative to Nigeria. He is facilitating United Nations support for ongoing efforts towards the safe release of the schoolgirls abducted in Chibok, Borno State, on 14 April, as well as for wider assistance to address the threat of Boko Haram.

32. In that capacity, my Special Representative carried out a first mission to Abuja from 12 to 15 May. He met with President Jonathan and other senior Government officials, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Justice and the Attorney-General. He also met with the Chair of the presidential committee on the abducted girls, the Director General of the National Emergency Management Agency, the Chair of the national human rights commission and the Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission, as well as with the ambassadors of the countries that have offered assistance to support Nigeria's efforts to release the abducted girls. He reiterated the firm condemnation by the United Nations of the abductions and reaffirmed support for Nigeria's efforts, including through the development by the United Nations country team of an integrated support package. The package will include immediate support for the affected families, the population and the girls after their release, in particular in respect of psychosocial counselling and facilitating their reintegration with their families and communities. The package will also address emergency needs and early recovery support to help to tackle the country's long-term structural challenges.

33. During that visit, my Special Representative expressed concern over the deteriorating situation in the north-eastern part of the country. He offered the support of the United Nations to enhance national coordination mechanisms and requested that the Government facilitate access for humanitarian actors to all persons in need of emergency assistance. In his discussions with various interlocutors, he stressed the need to strengthen regional cooperation as part of the response to the threats posed by the activities of Boko Haram.

34. During his second visit to Nigeria, from 4 to 9 June, my Special Representative met with Government officials, including the Governor of Borno State, former Heads of State, Olusegun Obasanjo and Abdulsalami Abubakar, political party leaders, civil society, and regional and international partners. During his meetings, he stressed the importance for all Nigerians, regardless of political and religious divides, to work together to confront the challenges facing their country. On 12 June, he participated in a ministerial meeting in London aimed at strengthening operational cooperation initiatives in the Lake Chad Basin.

Guinea

35. On 13 January, my Special Representative attended the inauguration and opening session of the newly elected Parliament in Guinea. At the request of the Government, UNOWA also facilitated a United Nations technical mission to the country led by the Peacebuilding Support Office from 21 to 25 April, to identify ways in which the United Nations could support the new Parliament.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

36. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission continued to build on the progress made in the implementation of the judgment of the International Court of Justice of

10 October 2002 on the land and maritime dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. At the 32nd session of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, which was held in Abuja on 1 and 2 February, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Chair of the Commission, together with the Heads of the Cameroon and Nigeria delegations, assessed the overall situation and prospects for completing the border demarcation in 2014. The parties approved a schedule of activities, including the final field missions, the preparation of the maps and the finalization of the procès-verbal of the land and maritime boundary. They also agreed to convene two sessions of the Commission in April and July. However, the deteriorating security situation in north-eastern Nigeria impeded the conduct of the envisaged field visits, considerably slowing the progress made towards completing the process.

37. Approximately 1,947 km of the estimated 2,100 km land boundary have so far been assessed and agreed upon by the parties. The marking of the boundary and the construction of pillars continues. Some 289 pillars were built between January and June, bringing the total number of pillars constructed to 667. During the reporting period, the committee, which was established to prepare the land and maritime boundary statement, held two meetings, with the active support of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat. The United Nations Cartographic Section is also working to produce maps of the boundary statement, which will pave the way for producing large-scale map sheets.

West Africa

38. From 16 to 18 April, my Special Representative accompanied the Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, on a visit to Senegal, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, they reviewed the situation in West Africa with President Ouattara and commended the contribution he had made during his two-year tenure as Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS. During their discussions, they noted that United Nations support for Côte d'Ivoire remained essential, especially with respect to the mobilization of resources for the dialogue and reconciliation process, for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and for building the capacity of such key institutions as the national human rights commission and the Haute autorité pour la bonne gouvernance. In their meeting with the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, in Conakry, the Under-Secretary-General and my Special Representative encouraged him to work with the opposition in implementing the residual provisions of the 3 July 2013 political agreement. The President affirmed Guinea's readiness to strengthen its partnership with the United Nations by increasing troop contributions for peacekeeping. In Nouakchott, they encouraged President Abdel Aziz to continue to engage in political dialogue with the opposition and to help create conducive conditions for the upcoming presidential elections. The Under-Secretary-General also seized the opportunity to consult with President Abdel Aziz, in his capacity as the current Chairperson of the African Union, on the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

39. On 6 May, my Special Representative travelled to Accra to meet with President Mahama, following his election as the new Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS at the 44th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS held in Yamoussoukro on 28 and 29 March. He reiterated the commitment of UNOWA to continuing to support ECOWAS through joint programming of activities and close collaboration

on regional strategies for the promotion of peace and security. They discussed the elections scheduled to be held in a number of countries in West Africa, and my Special Representative stated again that the United Nations was ready to support national and regional efforts for the peaceful conduct of the elections.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

40. UNOWA played a pivotal role in launching the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and in coordinating the work of the regional working group, which focuses on strengthening the capacity of national and regional security mechanisms to address cross-border threats. The contributions of UNOWA, along with all other United Nations entities involved in the implementation of the strategy are reflected in my recent report (S/2014/397) on progress made towards the implementation of the strategy.

Strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union

41. UNOWA, the secretariat of the Mano River Union and the ECOWAS Commission, with the support of UNDP, facilitated the launch of the process for the implementation of the strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union. UNOWA hosted a meeting of experts from Mano River Union countries, ECOWAS and the United Nations in Dakar from 28 to 30 April to draft a five-year document (2014-2018) on the implementation of the strategy. A progress report on the implementation was presented to the Ministerial Council of the Mano River Union in Conakry on 3 May, during the summit of the Heads of State of Mano River Union countries. On 12 June, UNOWA, the secretariat of the Union and the ECOWAS Commission facilitated the convening of a partner conference in Abidjan aimed at mobilizing funds for implementation of the strategy.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

42. Countries in the Gulf of Guinea continued to pursue efforts towards tackling piracy, armed robbery, trafficking and other illicit activities occurring at sea in the region, with the support of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. On 29 March, the ECOWAS integrated maritime strategy was adopted in Yamoussoukro. UNOWA, together with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, participated in a series of three meetings of the interregional working group on the establishment of an interregional coordination centre for safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. The working group comprises ECCAS, ECOWAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, United States Africa Command, the African Union, the United Nations (UNOWA and United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa), Cameroon, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States. The experts drafted documents aimed at operationalizing the interregional coordination centre, which will be headquartered in Yaoundé. They later met to update the documents based on the feedback received from regional stakeholders, member States and strategic partners. On 5 June, the chiefs of institutions of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, ECCAS and ECOWAS met in Yaoundé and endorsed the

additional protocol to the memorandum of understanding between ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission relating to the organization and functioning of centre. The organizations also agreed to inaugurate the centre on 11 July 2014.

Security sector reform

43. The ECOWAS Commission held an intergovernmental experts meeting on the validation of its policy framework on security sector reform and governance in Banjul, on 22 and 23 May. The policy framework was developed with the support of UNOWA and other United Nations entities. During the meeting, the Commission urged member States to identify national security strategies with developmental objectives.

44. During the reporting period, with the support of the United Nations, Guinea finalized its sectorial action plans on defence, police and civilian protection, justice, customs, water and forestry, as envisaged in the national defence and security policy adopted in 2013. On 7 May, my Special Representative attended the meeting of the Strategic Orientation Commission of the Guinean National Steering Committee for Security Sector Reform at the invitation of President Condé. The Government presented a national strategy for priority actions for 2014-2017 to the partners at the meeting. The strategy sets out three priority areas, namely, the strengthening of security sector governance, the enhancement of operational capacities and the improvement of the civil-military relationship.

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

45. At its 44th ordinary session, held in Yamoussoukro on 28 and 29 March, the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS raised concerns over the devastating impact of violent extremism and growing transnational organized crime. The ECOWAS Commission also began the review of the ECOWAS regional action plan to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa (2008-2014). UNOWA, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), contributed to the ECOWAS meeting of the inter-ministerial drug coordinating committees held in January in Cotonou, where elements for the regional action plan covering the period 2015-2020 were formulated.

46. My Special Representative also attended the 57th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, held in Vienna on 13 and 14 March, as part of his continuing efforts to advocate for greater international support to combat the illicit drug trade in West Africa. He also held discussions with the Executive Director of UNODC on further joint activities to be undertaken with UNOWA. On 6 May, he visited Accra, where he discussed the West Africa Coast Initiative and transnational organized crime with the new Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, President Mahama of Ghana.

47. In his capacity as Chair of the High-level Policy Committee of the West Africa Coast Initiative, my Special Representative visited all five member countries of the Initiative (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) during the reporting period and held meetings with their respective Heads of State. He also visited the three transnational crime units in Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and observed the progress made in their operationalization, notwithstanding

the resource constraints and other challenges facing the units. Following the drawdown of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone affirmed that the transnational crime unit would be fully integrated into the country's security architecture in 2014. Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire announced plans to establish their national units in the near future.

48. My Special Representative also chaired the West Africa Coast Initiative High-level Donors Conference held in New York on 22 May, with the participation of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Executive Director of UNODC. The meeting was attended by the Ministers from the five West Africa Coast Initiative countries and a number of international donors. The Ministers reiterated the commitment of their countries to the programme and to the overall fight against transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, within the framework of the ECOWAS action plan. On 1 June, the Secretary-General of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), Ronald K. Noble, visited my Special Representative in Dakar. They paid a joint visit to Guinea-Bissau on 2 June for discussions with the national authorities, including on the country's transnational crime unit.

Counter-terrorism

49. The African Union-led Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region continued to make progress, with support from the African Union Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism. UNOWA attended the meetings of the heads of intelligence and security services of the concerned countries in Niamey on 17 and 18 February and in Ouagadougou on 19 and 20 May. Participants at the meeting in Ouagadougou decided, in close coordination with the Government of Nigeria, to establish an ad hoc coordination cell in Abuja to enhance the exchange of information and intelligence as part of efforts against Boko Haram. The meeting also took note of the decision of the African Union Commission to establish a regional task force to facilitate effective regional action against Boko Haram.

50. On 10 May, the ministerial committee of the ECOWAS intergovernmental action group against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism met in Niamey. Various speakers noted that financial crimes, including money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, were posing grave threats to the security, stability and development of the countries in the subregion and underscored the need to take action to counter those menaces. France and the United States have increased their military support to the Niger since January. A number of countries have also dispatched teams of military and intelligence experts to Abuja to assist Nigeria's efforts in securing the safe release of the schoolgirls abducted on 14 April by Boko Haram. Following the security summit hosted by France in Paris on 17 May, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, stepped up cooperation to counter the activities of Boko Haram. The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force has also been providing technical assistance to Nigerian authorities in the fight against terrorism.

51. From 13 to 15 May, a meeting of border-control officials of the countries of the Sahel and the Maghreb was held in Nouakchott at the initiative of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, with support from the United Nations

Counter-Terrorism Centre. Participants discussed the strengthening of border management, building on the outcome of the conference held in Rabat in March 2013 on border control cooperation in the Sahel and the Maghreb. Several partners, including UNOWA, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and INTERPOL, contributed to creating a network of border security practitioners. On 21 May, the Ministers of Interior of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and the Niger formed the Group of Five for the Sahel (with the participation of Senegal and the European Union as guests), which will be based in Nouakchott, as a coordination framework for efforts to fight terrorism and other cross-border threats.

C. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

52. UNOWA convened a series of consultative meetings with stakeholders, including national human rights institutions on 23 April and civil society networks on 28 May in the context of the Rights up Front Action Plan of the Secretary-General. Participants reviewed the sociopolitical situation in the subregion and stressed the role of civil society in the promotion of respect for the rule of law and human rights during upcoming elections in the subregion.

53. On 13 February, UNOWA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women launched an online database on gender, women, peace and security in West Africa, working in collaboration with ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and other members of the working group on women, peace and security in West Africa. The database will be used as a tool to improve information and knowledge-sharing in the region. Twenty national focal points were trained to manage the database. During the reporting period, UNOWA and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office also launched a review of ongoing Peacebuilding Fund projects in West Africa, with a view to identifying new opportunities for the promotion of gender equality, and the implementation of the United Nations policy to promote women's participation in political and electoral processes.

54. With the support of the Peacebuilding Fund, UNOWA facilitated and coordinated the deployment, to Guinea-Bissau from 7 to 18 April, of a "solidarity mission" by the working group on women, peace and security in West Africa to observe the presidential and legislative elections of 13 April. The mission established a "women's situation room" in Bissau through which civil society organizations contributed to the monitoring and observation of the elections. On 16 May, UNOWA and the Working Group also coordinated a peaceful march in Dakar, Senegal in solidarity with ongoing calls for the release of the schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram.

D. Inter-institutional cooperation

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

55. During the reporting period, UNOWA and the heads of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system based in Dakar held regular consultative meetings aimed at sharing information and strengthening cooperation. On 21 January, my Special Representative briefed the regional directors on political

developments in the region, in particular on the progress made in Guinea, as well as on the implementation plan for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the meeting of the steering committee for implementation of the strategy. On 15 April, UNOWA also convened a meeting of regional directors on the occasion of the visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to West Africa. They discussed the current humanitarian and development issues in West Africa, in particular the emerging challenges and spill-over effects of the situation in Nigeria. On 19 May, my Special Representative met with the directors of the agencies and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel to discuss United Nations support to assist the Government of Nigeria in its efforts to counter the terrorist threat in the north-eastern part of the country and its humanitarian consequences. On 10 June, my Special Representative introduced my Special Envoy for the Sahel, Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, to the heads of the agencies and programmes and discussions were held concerning the way forward for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

56. On 9 May, my Special Representative convened in Dakar the 26th regular meeting of heads of United Nations special political and peacekeeping missions in West Africa. Participants noted the progress made in Guinea-Bissau and the need for continuous regional and international assistance for the country. They also underscored the importance of international support for the electoral processes scheduled to be held in a number of countries in the region in 2015 and 2016.

Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

57. During the reporting period, UNOWA and ECOWAS continued to actively cooperate on issues related to peace and security in the subregion. UNOWA paid several visits to the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja to discuss, inter alia, the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, efforts towards the establishment of a subregional political framework on governance and reform of the security sector in West Africa and support for the implementation of the ECOWAS integrated maritime strategy adopted on 29 March in Yamoussoukro.

58. On 4 March, the second ECOWAS-UNOWA desk-to-desk meeting was held in Abuja to define joint activities over the coming year. The priority activities identified included support for the Mano River Union, support for upcoming electoral processes, including the organization of joint early warning missions, joint programming for the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, support for the ECOWAS Council of the Wise and support for the operationalization of the ECOWAS Mediation Facilitation Division. Participants also discussed the regional security situation, cooperation on maritime security, human rights and gender issues, as well as the development of an ECOWAS communications strategy. UNOWA and ECOWAS also conducted an early warning assessment mission to Burkina Faso from 20 to 26 April. In addition, my Special Representative regularly engaged with the Chair of ECOWAS, the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security on issues of common concern.

59. UNOWA continued to work closely with the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel on the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and as Co-Chair of the technical secretariat of the Bamako ministerial coordination platform for the strategy. On 30 and 31 January,

my Special Representative attended the twenty-second ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union held in Addis Ababa as part of the United Nations delegation led by the Deputy Secretary-General. He also attended the high-level retreat convened by the African Union Commission in Durban, South Africa, on 29 and 30 April on the theme "Silencing the guns in Africa".

60. UNOWA attended the 4th and 5th meetings of the heads of intelligence and security services of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region, held on 17 and 18 February and on 19 and 20 May, respectively, within the framework of the African Union-led Nouakchott Process on the enhancing security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture. My Special Representative also attended the third ministerial meeting of the countries of the Sahel on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan region held in Niamey, on 19 February.

Observations and recommendations

61. I welcome the successful completion of presidential and legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau, which could not have been achieved without the sustained support and engagement of key regional and international partners. The swearing-in and installation of the newly elected authorities has marked the return to full constitutional order in the country. As the country embarks on rebuilding its State institutions and implementing key national reforms, including the civilian oversight of its armed forces, continued regional and international support for the country's needs and peacebuilding efforts will be critical. I call on the international community to provide Guinea-Bissau with the assistance needed to address its most pressing requirements and long-term support for rebuilding its State institutions.

62. I am also pleased with the remarkable progress made in Sierra Leone that has led to the closure of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the country. As I expressed during my visit to Freetown in March 2014, the United Nations will continue to support the Government and people of Sierra Leone as they continue on the path of political stability and prosperity.

63. The United Nations will continue its peacebuilding engagement in Guinea to promote further strengthening of State institutions and the reform of the security and criminal justice sectors in accordance with the request of the Government. I call on international partners to continue to accompany the Government in its efforts to achieve its key peacebuilding priorities.

64. I am concerned about the early tensions that have emerged in the lead-up to the presidential and legislative elections, scheduled to be held in some countries in West Africa in 2015 and 2016. I encourage the respective Governments and national stakeholders to take all necessary steps to increase dialogue and achieve early consensus on contentious issues. I call on all actors to make efforts to create conducive conditions for inclusive, free and credible elections, including by ensuring the full participation of women in the political and electoral processes. The increasingly complex situation in West Africa underscores the need for the dedicated analytical unit within the Political Affairs Section of UNOWA to better inform good offices efforts and to support timely preventive action, as recommended in my previous report.

65. I reiterate my strong condemnation of the atrocities being perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria and in the bordering countries of Cameroon and the Niger, which have resulted in significant civilian casualties, large-scale destruction of property and extensive displacement of people. I remain particularly concerned about the continued detention by Boko Haram of the schoolgirls abducted in Chibok, Borno State. The United Nations, including through my Special Representative for West Africa and High-level Representative to Nigeria, will continue to support the national authorities in securing the safe release of the girls and in addressing the insecurity in the north-eastern part of the country and its humanitarian and human rights consequences. I am also concerned over the negative impact that the insecurity is having on countries in the region and reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to work with ECOWAS, the African Union, countries in the region and international partners to tackle the regional challenges posed by Boko Haram and terrorism.

66. I welcome the efforts being deployed by Nigeria, with the support and assistance of its regional and international partners, to combat terrorism and address the root causes of insecurity in the country. I urge the Government of Nigeria to take all necessary measures to provide security and assistance to facilitate humanitarian access to the affected civilian populations in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States. I stress that Government forces and security agents must conduct their operations and activities with full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. This should include observance of international standards relating to detention conditions, use of force and due process for all detainees. My Special Representative for West Africa and High-level Representative will continue to engage the Government, the Governments of neighbouring countries and international partners, in efforts to find lasting solutions to the challenges facing Nigeria.

67. I commend the efforts being made by Governments and subregional organizations to collectively address the increasing incidence of transnational organized crime, terrorism, violent extremism, piracy and armed robbery at sea. I encourage international partners to continue to provide support for those efforts. I also welcome the regional initiatives aimed at collectively addressing those security challenges. Ongoing efforts to implement the decisions reached at the summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS and ECOWAS held in Yaoundé in June 2013 should be expedited with the continued support of the regional organizations concerned, as well as UNOWA and UNOCA. I also welcome the progress made and call for continued efforts to implement the strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union, with the support of ECOWAS, the Union and UNOWA.

68. My Special Representative for West Africa will continue to work in close cooperation with my Special Envoy for the Sahel, in support of the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. Stability and security in the Sahel remain contingent on addressing immediate as well as deeper-rooted challenges, especially those faced by at least 20 million people who remain food insecure again in 2014.

69. I encourage Member States to align their financial contributions with the needs-based priorities identified in the 2014-2016 strategic response plan. While focusing on life-saving activities, such priorities also represent important opportunities to address both acute and chronic vulnerabilities in the Sahel.

70. I welcome the steps taken by ECOWAS to renew and update its regional action plan to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa. However, I am concerned that the subregion is emerging as a region for illicit drug production and consumption. I encourage ECOWAS to expedite the review of its action plan, while taking into consideration those emerging challenges. I commend the partners of the West African Coast Initiative for the important role that the initiative is playing as a tool for the implementation of the ECOWAS regional plan of action, in particular through the setting up and operationalization of transnational crime units.

71. I am encouraged by the continued cooperation between UNOWA and regional organizations, including ECOWAS and the secretariat of the Mano River Union, in their efforts to address the threats to peace and security in the region. I welcome the regular consultations between my Special Representative and the leaders of the West African countries and encourage the further strengthening of those relations. In the same vein, I also welcome the continuing cooperation among United Nations entities operating in West Africa and delivering as one United Nations in support of the countries of the region and subregional organizations, and commend UNOWA leadership in that regard.

72. I commend the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for its accomplishments in relation to the demarcation of the boundary between the two countries. I encourage the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to continue their efforts towards resolving the remaining areas of disagreement, with a view to completing implementation of the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002.

73. Despite the reported economic growth, West Africa is still affected by limited socioeconomic development and high unemployment and poverty, particularly among young people and women. Socioeconomic development and regional integration to facilitate trade and development should continue to be a regional priority. In that connection, I commend the progress made by ECOWAS to promote the development of energy and infrastructure sectors and to boost interregional trade and the free movement of people, goods and services.

74. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of West Africa, the ECOWAS Commission, the African Union and the Mano River Union for their continued cooperation. I also extend my gratitude to all United Nations entities in West Africa, civil society organizations and other partners for their continued collaboration with UNOWA in the implementation of its mandate. I express my particular appreciation to my Special Representative, the staff of UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their efforts to advance peace and security in West Africa.